

**Madeira City Schools
Planning Commission
Alternative Learning Options Study
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Chair: Allison Evans

Marsha Deddens

Susan Fraley

Julie Leugers

Diane Schulteis

Resource: Steve Kramer

Purpose

The Alternative Learning Options committee was formed at the request of the Madeira City Schools Board of Education to study alternative resources to provide educational and enrichment opportunities for our students.

Methodology

Project Approach

Initially, the project team explored technology based education option, finding an impressive variety of choices available to educators.

The team focus then changed to the challenges of organizing, controlling, and quantifying alternative learning options. After interviews with the district superintendent, guidance office, and high school principal, the project was further limited to a presentation of the available options rather than an implementation strategy recommendation.

This report does, in fact, conclude with recommendations to the district for the implementation of alternative learning strategies.

Need for Alternative Learning Options

It was observed that students might pursue alternative learning options for the following reasons:

- Credit Recovery; in order to fulfill a graduation requirement of a failed or incomplete class
- Placement/prerequisite; in order to succeed in a desired class for which a foundation is required
- Enrichment, personal interest, educational/career goals

The district might pursue alternative learning options in to improve the quality of a class and/or offer the class in a more cost efficient manner. Individual teachers or departments might employ alternative learning options to improve the quality of a class, offer enrichment to appropriate students, and/or support struggling students.

Educational/Enrichment Options Currently Available to students

Current Offerings through District

	Curriculum	Extracurricular/Enrichment
MES	Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Music, PE, Technology	Spanish, Mad Science, Culture Club, Chess, Madeira Singers
MMS	Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Music, PE, Technology,	Sports, Math Counts, Power of the Pen/writing club, robotics, Student Council, Honor Choir, Green Acres, Art Club
MHS	Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Music, PE, Technology, Creative Foods	Sports, Foreign Language Clubs, Newspaper, Yearbook, Theater, JETS, Guard, NHS, GSA, Academic Team, U4U, Student Government, Chess Club

Current Offerings Outside of District

Although outside the scope of this project, the committee notes that Madeira’s desirable location as an older suburb allows families to take advantage of enrichment programs through the City of Cincinnati and the universities. Although not inclusive, examples include

- Cincinnati Conservatory of Music Prep Program
- Youth programs through the Cincinnati Zoo and Museum Center
- The Super Saturday Program
- Hamilton County Public Libraries

as well as a wide offering of club sports, community centers (JCC, YMCA), scouts, religious education, etc.

High School Flexible Credit

“The Board of Education recognizes that an effective educational program is one that provides students opportunities to customize aspects of their learning around their respective needs and interests.

Credit flexibility is one method to motivate and increase student learning by allowing access to more resources, customization around individual student needs and the use of multiple measures of learning. Credit flexibility shifts the focus from “seat time” to performance.

Students can earn units of high school credit based on an individually developed and school approved credit flexibility plan. The intent of credit flexibility is to meet increased expectations for high school graduation in response to globalization, technology, and demographics, and to meet the demand for 21st century skills. Students can earn high school credit by:

Completing coursework;

Testing out or showing mastery of course content;

Pursuing an educational option and/or an individually approved option; and/or

Any combination of the above.

Students wishing to pursue a course through credit flexibility must adhere to all student scheduling dates and meet with a teacher certified in the area being pursued to write up a proposal for that course.¹

- Completing coursework
- Testing out or showing mastery of course content
- Pursuing an educational option and/or an individually approved option and/or
- Any combination of the above²

Post Secondary Enrollment Options Program

The Post-Secondary Enrollment Options Program allows high school students to attend a college of technical institute, either full-time or part-time. The program is designed

- To promote rigorous educational pursuits and
- To provide a wide variety of options for students.

The law provides two options; post-secondary credit or high school credit.³

Likely Topics

The April 10, 2008 Planning Commission Study, “Madeira vs. The World” benchmarked the district’s course offerings against similar districts. The study concluded that similar districts differed from Madeira in offering

- AP Calculus BC
- AP Fine Arts
- Global Languages

Educational/Enrichment Options Potentially Available to students

Books

Students are known to have mastered content skills through books and self-study. Examples known in this study are

- AP classes not offered; World History, Economics
- Fortran programming

Although other examples likely exist, identifying them is outside the goal of this project.

¹ Madeira High School Guidance Department Policy available at http://www.madeiracityschools.org/school_dept.aspx?schoolid=1&deptid=156

² http://www.madeiracityschools.org/school_dept.aspx?schoolid=1&deptid=156

³ http://www.madeiracityschools.org/school_dept.aspx?schoolid=1&deptid=156

District Partnerships

School districts, particularly those that are located close to the others, are forming partnerships to share expertise and facilities to enhance learning opportunities for their students.

Indian Hill and Mariemont districts are each teaching an advanced class that students from both districts can attend. No funds are exchanged. Credit is issued to each student by the home district. In the first semester a class is being held first bell at Indian Hill and in the second semester a class is being held at Mariemont last bell. The two schools do not share schedules that exactly match and the first and last bell were selected to maximize transportation options. Logistics have been the biggest challenge. The first experiment with this approach is seen as a success and both districts are open to additional options and other districts. NOTE: the total number of students interested in each class was an appropriate size for one section.

Oak Hills district has hosted a University of Cincinnati taught undergraduate course at the high school and has opened attendance for students from nearby districts in order to reach the needed enrollment level.

PSEOP (Post-Secondary Enrollment Options Program) is available through Raymond Walters. High School Seniors can enroll in RWC classes. The option will be appropriate for high school students whose local school district is not able to offer the course(s) needed to meet students' level of academic performance and for those students who have already completed all high school requirements and are ready to get a "head start" on college. The program is not intended to replace high school honors or advanced placement classes.

Ohio Virtual Academy

"The mission of OHVA is to empower students and their parents with an innovative and effective instructional program to achieve high standards and help students reach their full academic and social potential.

"Our vision is to create a high-performance school that equips teachers and parents with the tools of tomorrow, thereby giving our students all the opportunities they need to succeed in life and creating a new model for the twenty-first century public school.

The Ohio Virtual Academy uses the K¹² curriculum to offer Ohio students in grades K-12 an exceptional learning experience. With individualized learning approaches, the Ohio Virtual Academy and K¹² provide the tools kids need to succeed—in school and beyond.

The Ohio Virtual Academy is one of the fastest growing schools in Ohio, and here's why:

- Our **experienced, licensed teachers**, who are available online and by phone.
- The **exceptional, individualized K¹² curriculum**, which covers the core subject areas and electives. Based on decades of education research, this curriculum packages high-quality lessons with mastery-based assessments that ensure students achieve success at each and every level. [Find out more about K¹²](#).
- The **online planning and assessment tools**, resources, and hands-on materials ranging from textbooks to telescopes, from rocks and dirt to beautifully illustrated classic children's stories, and much more.
- Our **active, supportive school community**, which organizes fun and informative monthly activities where OHVA parents, students, and staff share their successes, helpful hints, and more.
- The **high quality, tuition-free public education** that enables a learning experience that is individualized for each student.
- Our **ranking as the top-performing statewide e-school in Ohio** for the fifth year in a row.
- [Our accreditation](#) from the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) and the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI)."⁴

BYU Independent Study

MHS Guidance has satisfactory experience with BYU Independent Study. From their website: BYU Independent Study is an online educational program that offers more than 500 online courses—university, high school, middle school, and personal enrichment—to people throughout the United States and in over 50 foreign countries. Enrollment is open to anyone, at any time of the year, with a full year to complete most courses.

We now offer three types of courses (Paper/Online, NEW Online, and NEW Instructor-Guided) to help high school students learn in many different situations. Our traditional Paper/Online courses are self-paced and can be accessed online, with the option to purchase a printed course packet for \$10. Our NEW Online courses provide advanced features and productivity tools, including a student homepage, improved access to student grades, and a student progress calendar. Our NEW Instructor-Guided courses provide students with instructor interaction, including live video conferencing, collaboration with other students through discussion boards, required checkpoints, and active progress mentoring.

⁴ <http://www.k12.com/ohva/who-we-are>

University courses cost only \$157 per credit hour. High school Paper/Online and NEW Online courses are \$128 per 0.5-credit (half) credit hour, and the NEW Instructor-Guided courses are \$228. Middle school courses are also only \$128 per 0.5-credit (half) credit course. Also offered are five 0.5-credit "values" high school courses for only \$48 each, to help students who need to complete additional credit for graduation.

Courses are taught by certified instructors and have the high quality and rigor needed to prepare students to meet your school's graduation requirements. The courses engage students with multimedia, video, animation, and interactive labs. BYU Independent Study students register online or by phone for a course and can start their course immediately. After submitting all course assignments, students take a final exam with a certified proctor or testing center in their area. Course credit can be transferred to most educational institutions across the nation.

BYU is accredited as an institution by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). The BYU Independent Study High School Program is accredited by the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC), which recently joined AdvancED, and by the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC). BYU Independent Study has won 28 national course awards from the University Continuing Education Association and the American Association of Collegiate Independent Study.⁵

Khan Academy: A free world-class education for anyone anywhere.

From their website: "The Khan Academy is an organization on a mission. We're a not-for-profit with the goal of changing education for the better by providing a free world-class education to anyone anywhere.

All of the site's resources are available to anyone. It doesn't matter if you are a student, teacher, home-schooler, principal, adult returning to the classroom after 20 years, or a friendly alien just trying to get a leg up in earthly biology. The Khan Academy's materials and resources are available to you completely free of charge.

How it works for students

Students can make use of our extensive video library, practice exercises, and assessments from any computer with access to the web.

- Complete custom self-paced learning tool
- A dynamic system for getting help
- A custom profile, points, and badges to measure progress

⁵ <http://is.byu.edu/site/about/what-is.cfm>

Coaches, parents, and teachers

Coaches, parents, and teachers have unprecedented visibility into what their students are learning and doing on the Khan Academy.

- Ability to see any student in detail
- A real-time class report for all students
- Better intelligence for doing targeted interventions⁶

iTunesU

The iTunes U app gives you access to complete courses from leading universities and other schools — plus the world’s largest digital catalog of free education content — right on your iPad, iPhone, or iPod touch. Whether you’re majoring in molecular biology at a university, taking Spanish in high school, or just interested in European history, you now have a valuable tool to help you learn anytime, anywhere.

Features:

Free courses in a wide array of subjects

- Take free courses created and taught by instructors from leading universities and other schools
- See all assignments and updates from the instructor in one place, and check off assignments as you complete them
- Take notes and highlight text in iBooks and see them consolidated for easy reviewing in the iTunes U app
- Access course materials, including audio, video, books, documents & presentations, apps, and new iBooks textbooks for iPad

The world’s largest catalog of free education content

- Choose from more than 500,000 free lectures, videos, books, and other resources on thousands of subjects from Algebra to Zoology
- Browse collections from education and cultural institutions in 26 countries — including Stanford, Yale, MIT, Oxford, UC Berkeley, MoMA, the New York Public Library, and the Library of Congress⁷

⁶ <http://www.khanacademy.org/about>

⁷ <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/itunes-u/id490217893?mt=8>

Conclusions

Student Integral in Learning Process

The team found an abundance of content and delivery systems available for Alternative Education Options. And both teachers and parents are well aware of student resourcefulness in learning skills and content, when properly motivated. But none of the option evaluated replace the discipline of regular, personal contact between teacher and student within the structure of assignments, due dates, assessment, and feedback.

Circumstances regularly exist where a motivated student absorbs content and masters skills, but these may be outside of the district's interest or ability to assess.

Learning Occurs in Spite of Education

Students learn through a variety of means. A young adult prepared for life beyond Madeira needs to demonstrate competence in the requirements for graduation. He or she also needs to explore personal interests, meet and observe adults in the variety of professional and vocational areas, master skills he or she finds valuable, encounter experiences requiring problem solving and personal responsibility. Extracurricular and community activities, after school jobs and volunteer endeavors all provide opportunities for learning as well as inspiring a young person to pursue additional education.

Recommendations

Utilize Alternative Education Options Only to address Specific Problem

The committee recommends that the district be very purposeful when choosing an alternative education option to *replace* the standard classroom experience. The Guidance Department sets a fine example of using established resources to address specific student needs. Guidance also observes that learner benefit from the structure of a relationship with a classroom teacher and might require staff oversight when undertaking self directed study.

Tremendous Potential for Teacher Utilization of Alternative Education Options

The committee recommends that the district encourage as much use of alternative education options to *support/enrich/extend* the standard classroom experience, blended learning. ⁸A teacher using or suggesting an Alternate Educational Option

⁸ Blended Learning Takes Hold in Ohio, Europe, Asia, around US FOCUSEDUCATION 11/8/2011

for a specific group of students on a limited topic has already proven successful for the implementation of alternate education options.

The district should leverage this behavior by utilizing staff development time for best practice sharing between teachers of alternative Educational Options. For example, if a Middle School math teacher finds Kahn Academy an effective and economical tool for struggling students, that tool should be demonstrated through the department and shared with the community.

In addition, teacher professional evaluation should include his or her use of alternative education options as class resources. While the current education environment emphasizes results on standardized tests, the district can encourage and reward staff that utilizes alternative education options to meet the needs of students outside the content of standardized tests.

Communicate Judiciously Through the Community

Although tempting, the district should avoid a resource list of alternative education options. The field is very dynamic and would prove burdensome to maintain a current list. Likewise, district communication connotes endorsement and implies that the district, another overwhelming challenge, has vetted the source.

Instead, communicate resources appropriate for a specific situation, especially if an illuminated example is involved, e.g. a specific group of students working on a particular assignment with marked results. This leaves both teachers and families the invitation to further explore an educational option.